

D. S. Fredrickson. Memoir

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Under headline **HARRIS-NIH DISPUTE CONTINUES: Tension between HHS Secretary Patricia Harris and National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Donald Fredrickson over health research legislation is building to a point where rampant rumors of an imminent Fredrickson departure (his press office denies them) are depressing morale at the once-proud research campus. Harris has been vigorously insisting that she'll run things; Fredrickson quietly, but firmly resisting. In a related incident last week, Dr. Burke Zimmerman, NIH lobbyist, was relieved of his job by Fredrickson--reportedly on Harris' orders. Zimmerman had clashed with Martin Kagnoff, a University of California researcher, who, on sabbatical, has been writing research legislation for the House Commerce Health Subcommittee. . .**

"On Wednesday, March 21, 1980, Secretary Harris would arrive at the Lister Hill Center to preside over an inauguration. She would be introduced by Dr. Fredrickson. . .

"Well, it started at 1:30 p.m. E.D.T., when I was interrupted in a conference. . .to take a call. . . 'This is Miss____; she wants to tell you where to go on your trip with the President this afternoon. . . to visit the site of the eruption of Mt. St. Helen.

" At 4:00 p.m. a small party of us left the VIP lounge at Andrews to board Air Force One. The party included Press Chief Jody Powell, Science Advisor Frank Press, his assistant Dennis Preager, Bill Lubash presidential physician, Sec. of Agriculture Berglund, Sec. Army Alexander, Sec. Interior Andrus, FEMA Director Macy, Senator Mark Hatfield, Senator Warren Magnuson, Congressmen MacCormick, Bonkers, and AuCoin, Lots of Secret Service, and the Director of NIH.

" My seat was next to Secretary Bergland, who is a very bright, moderately aggressive, tough-minded guy who asked me what I thought of his science programs. I told him he needed more short-term grants . . .and above all, see that plant science becomes as good in molecular botany as possible. . .

"President Carter arrived by helicopter. No Imperial President this informal and pleasant man. We landed at the Portland Airport at 9:30 where a group of buses took us. . .to Vancouver. . . The President sat at the edge of a rough table. Governor Dixie Lee Ray was characteristically blunt and peremptory with the president. 'We want money, not advice and testily added that federal action must be integrated with the state. The President took this all calmly. Senator Magnuson stood 'tall' and delivered to the Governor a pointed verbal lesson in etiquette and decorum.

"That night at the Portland Marriott Hotel, two men arrived at the door and asked if I wanted my White House extension phone connected here. I replied, 'Thank you, I won't need it.

" The next morning eight helicopters took us over the site, which was a pattern of destruction, particularly the thousands of tree lying like matches on grass of what had been a great forest. We eventually went back to the Red Cross Refugee Center in the Cascade Middle School Gym and, after doughnuts, then took off for Portland and Spokane. Here there were mayors of the neighboring towns, some carrying bags of ash. Several of these were pressed on the President, which he handed to me, since I happened to be nearest. The President handled the crowds well. He memorizes facts like a sponge and handily plays them back without notes. By the end of the second day he was including me in the introductions to the small crowd. The NIH Director could find no one sputtering, coughing or demonstrating any other health problems from the blankets of ash on all surfaces.

" Air Force One returned to Andrews Air Force base about 7:30 on the second day.

"At Lister Hill on the first day, Secretary Harris noted to her audience that "It is obvious that Dr. Fredrickson prefers to meet a raging volcano than the Secretary. This remark was relayed to me on the evening of our return. Therefore I went to the laboratory and found a 100 ml tincture bottle, and poured in about half of a bag of ash I had brought back. I tied a blue ribbon to the neck and attached it to a brief note:

Madam Secretary,

We can't go on not meeting this way.

I left it with her Secretary and went off to the auditorium in the North Building where they staff was assembled for an awards presentation. The Secretary came in last and sat in the front row before her agency directors. Suddenly a hand was extended back to my position and I "gave her five." In her remarks she said had received a jar of Mt. St. Helen's ash from Dr. Fredrickson, who had exemplified the 'ubiquitous presence of the Public Health Service at all major sites of disaster.'"

D.S.F.